

A Letter to Citizens and Other Stakeholders in the District of Columbia

March 12, 2001

Dear Reader,

I am pleased to present my *2001-2002 Policy Agenda*, which accompanies my proposed FY2002 Budget and Financial Plan: *Building a City that Works for Everyone – Neighborhood by Neighborhood*. Chapters in the Policy Agenda provide greater background, detail, and philosophy on budgetary, legislative, and programmatic initiatives, as well as raise issues and questions that the elected leadership and the broader community should discuss while deciding priorities and allocating resources. To that end, the ownership of this book is far broader than the administration alone. It should provide the foundation for persons of differing viewpoints to discuss key budgetary, legislative, and policy issues. The following sections and chapters highlight critical areas reflected in my budget proposal.

Educating Our Children

1. ***Financing Public Education*** -- Most agree that our neighborhoods will never be fully revitalized until all children receive quality public education. Although my budget proposal includes full funding for public schools, public education in the District is undergoing tremendous change that require new ways of supporting schools. This chapter examines these issues and discusses options for resolution.
2. ***Turning Around Low-Performing Schools*** – Like many urban areas, the District has a number of schools where chronically poor performance persists. Without deflecting resources from other schools, it is my administration's top education priority to identify and implement innovative ways to address the particular problems of these schools.

Expanding Neighborhood Quality of Life

3. ***Neighborhood Action: Engaging Citizens in Real Change*** – My administration has launched a citizen engagement and strategic planning structure that has earned national

acclaim. This chapter outlines how neighborhood action, neighborhood planning, and neighborhood services combine to set priorities and produce results.

4. ***Making Neighborhoods Safe*** – The bedrock of a thriving neighborhood is public safety. This chapter discusses projects underway by the Metropolitan Police Department to expand community-based policing, and other efforts in the public safety area to improve service to citizens.
5. ***Maintaining Clean and Inviting Public Spaces*** – Maintenance of streets, parks, and trees – the basics of city government – has improved and will continue to improve in the District. This chapter outlines the progress made and planned in these areas.
6. ***Promoting Economic Development*** – Protecting homeowners and expanding affordable housing are key priorities of the Williams administration. This chapter addresses ways to prevent displacement of longtime residents, address the scourge of nuisance properties and expand the city's housing stock. It also describes other efforts at attracting businesses and other economic activity to neighborhoods.

Strengthening the Safety Net for Vulnerable Citizens

7. ***Building a Community-Based Health Care System*** – Reforming our health care system is the only way to improve the shockingly poor health indicators of our citizens. Beginning with dramatically increased access points to medical care throughout the underserved parts of our city, this chapter describes efforts to improve the city's health, including home visitation, school and environmental health, mental health, HIV/AIDS, and substance abuse programs.
8. ***Restructuring the Human Services Delivery System*** – More than a dozen agencies provide services to citizens in need – but too often these efforts lack coordination and the necessary focus on neighborhoods. This chapter describes a new concept for bring service delivery to communities in ways that makes for easier accessibility and greater results.
9. ***Innovations in Meeting the Needs of Children, Youth, and Families*** – The Children and Youth Investment Trust that I proposed two years ago has achieved in its early efforts to support community-based organizations. This chapter describes its first year of activities and its performance-based evaluation system. It also discusses how the Safe Passages Information System will employ state-of-the-art practices to support the services rendered to children across agencies and over time.
10. ***Transitioning Families from Welfare to Work*** – In March 2002, more than 2,700 DC families will exceed 60 months on the welfare rolls and no longer be eligible for federal benefits. This presents an enormous social challenge and could have considerable financial consequences. This chapter describes efforts to address the special needs of these families and others who might have extra difficulties in obtaining long-term jobs.
11. ***The Literacy Challenge*** -- Adult literacy remains a pervasive problem for the District. Estimates suggest that almost 40 percent of District adults lack some basic literacy skills.

This chapter looks at the national and local perspective, outlines the severe costs to society of adult literacy deficiencies, and discusses ways the District can proceed to address these issues.

Continuing Progress Toward Sound Financial Management and Operations

12. ***Maintaining Strong Financial Management*** – As the Control Period expires, the District will reassume substantial financial control. In doing so, we face several challenges and many opportunities. This chapter explores these issues and proposes new ideas for continuing the tremendous financial progress of the last several years.
13. ***A New Paradigm for District-Federal Relations*** – Over the course of American history, the federal government has gradually increased the local autonomy of the District. This chapter explores the local and national interests at play in the District's budgetary autonomy, legislative autonomy, and representation in Congress, and presents options for balanced solutions that serve the interests of all.
14. ***Building a More Efficient, Effective, and Responsive Government*** – The citizens of the District deserve the “gold standard” for services rendered by their government. This chapter describes how the District is reaching new levels of efficiency, productivity, and customer service.

As the Council considers my proposed FY 2002 Budget and Financial Plan, continued community dialogue is critical. It is my sincere hope that the *2001-2002 Policy Agenda* provides a clear and thoughtful guide for this discussion.

Sincerely,

Anthony A. Williams
Mayor